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United Nations Children's Fund

Summary

The present report is submitted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for consideration during the in-depth dialogue of the tenth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. It provides a summary of the Fund's approach to promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous children and women, and the work which the agency has been undertaking regarding indigenous peoples' issues. It further identifies gaps in its current efforts, and proposes a road map for moving that agenda forward. The Fund's immediate agenda in the promotion and protection of indigenous peoples' rights includes the design of a strategy that reinforces a human rights-based approach to development in favour of the rights of indigenous peoples.

The report is not exhaustive of UNICEF activities; it contains a range of practices and case studies pertaining to the Fund's interventions in the field, particularly as they relate to the ways in which the agency is responding to the recommendations of the Permanent Forum.

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I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has been a key actor in United Nations processes related to indigenous issues. At the global level, the organization has made significant contributions towards ensuring that the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues addresses the rights of indigenous children and women. UNICEF contributes to the work of the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues. In 2005 in particular, the Fund hosted the Support Group's annual meeting at its Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean in Panama City, the first meeting of the Support Group held away from United Nations Headquarters. The aim was to promote coordination among the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system at the regional and country levels, thus raising awareness of the gap between efforts at the global level and in the field, and generating momentum on the issue. Elaboration of the United Nations Development Group Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues was one of the recommendations of the meeting, and UNICEF co-chaired the inter-agency team in charge of drafting the guidelines.

2. UNICEF has been active at the country level, with various programmes and activities specifically designed to advance the rights of indigenous peoples, and with projects ranging from bilingual and intercultural education to culturally sensitive health services, birth registration and the fight against violence, abuse and exploitation. The agency is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women forming the other keystone of the agency's mandate and mission. The Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to all children in the world, and the principle of non-discrimination as articulated in Article 2 of the Convention is at the core of the work of the United Nations Children's Fund. The approach of UNICEF in this connection is inspired by the Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (General Assembly resolution 47/135, annex) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (resolution 61/295, annex).

3. UNICEF was also instrumental in the design of general comment No. 11 (2009) on indigenous children and their rights under the Convention, released by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF, among other things, facilitated consultations with indigenous representatives.

4. The UNICEF medium-term strategic plan for 2006-2013 (E/ICEF/2005/11; E/ICEF/2010/10), entitled "Investing in children: the UNICEF contribution to poverty reduction and the Millennium Summit agenda", clearly recognizes that in some countries, the children of indigenous populations tend to be disproportionately deprived of basic services. UNICEF cooperation will seek to benefit these children as a matter of priority, where needed. The strategic plan intends to go beyond support to specific programmes and projects, tackling the root causes of discrimination against and exclusion of indigenous children through the enhancement of relevant public policies. It identifies five focus areas that guide the efforts of UNICEF in asserting the rights of children in general and indigenous children in particular: (a) young child survival and development; (b) basic education and gender equality; (c) HIV/AIDS and children; (d) child protection from violence,

exploitation and abuse; and (e) policy advocacy and partnerships for children's rights.[1]

5. The work of UNICEF on indigenous issues forms part of the equity-based approach to its programmes and policies, which seeks to understand and address the root causes of inequity so that all children, particularly those who suffer the worst deprivations in society, including indigenous children, have access to education, health care, sanitation, clean water, protection and other services necessary for their survival, growth and development. UNICEF ensures the integration of cultural perspectives into its strategic plan as applied to indigenous women and children.

6. In response to the request of the Permanent Forum, UNICEF undertook a stocktaking exercise of its work on indigenous issues, using the Congo and Peru as case studies. This exercise is currently informing the design of an organizational framework for addressing indigenous issues within UNICEF, in response to the Permanent Forum's request of May 2006 for UNICEF to adopt a policy relating to indigenous youth and children. The stocktaking activity also formed the basis for a consultation on indigenous peoples' and minorities' issues which UNICEF organized in New York in April 2009.

II. Analysis and assessment of current work

7. The UNICEF field presence places the organization in a strategic position to promote and protect the rights of marginalized and excluded children and women, including those of indigenous backgrounds. To date, information gathered on UNICEF efforts at the country level in this area is primarily found in reports from UNICEF country offices which specifically mention indigenous peoples in their reporting, and it is within that context that the details of the present report are provided. Political sensitivities surrounding indigenous peoples' issues in some regions have also influenced the degree of UNICEF involvement, resulting in some regions being more visible actors as compared to others.

Regional perspectives on UNICEF practice in respect of indigenous peoples

8. A substantial number of UNICEF good practices with indigenous peoples emerge from the Latin America and Caribbean region, where UNICEF activities date back to the 1960s and perhaps even earlier, focusing on high-poverty areas, most of which were, and still are, indigenous areas. Those conditions apply in particular to the four countries in which indigenous peoples are a major portion of the national population: Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru.

9. The UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean has been working consistently since 2004 with a programme on the rights of indigenous children and adolescents supported by the Government of Spain through the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation. During the past six years the Regional Office and the 17 country offices which participated in the programme (Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador,

[1] For specific details of the medium-term strategic plan see E/ICEF/2010/1 and Corr.1. For full details on how UNICEF integrates indigenous peoples' issues into its policy framework, see Patrizio Warren, "Promoting the rights of indigenous children and women: a stocktaking of UNICEF's approach and practice", working paper (UNICEF, New York, 2009).

El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) have focused their work on the generation of strategic information, the empowerment of indigenous peoples (mainly women and adolescents) and the capacity-building of counterparts (mainly Governments) and of UNICEF staff. Other donor countries, such as Canada and Finland, have also contributed to the development of similar programmes on indigenous issues in some countries of the region.

10. Although less extensive, the organization's development work in the area of indigenous peoples is growing in Africa and Asia. The stocktaking report on the Congo indicates that since the late 1990s, the UNICEF country office in the Congo has addressed indigenous concerns through specific initiatives and interventions. Initially, those efforts consisted of supplying drugs, vaccines, school materials and other consumables to missions, non-governmental organizations and local line agencies in such areas as education, health and welfare that were working with indigenous peoples. By late 2001, this humanitarian phase evolved into an integrated project on the improvement of access to basic services for the indigenous ethnic minority (Baka) in the Sangha department.

III. Measures in relation to the recommendations of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

A. Response to recommendations made during previous sessions of the Permanent Forum addressed exclusively to the United Nations Children's Fund

Migration[2]

11. Since 2007, the UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean has increased its attention to the ways in which the migration phenomenon affects indigenous children. Most recently, UNICEF, in collaboration with the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) in Ecuador, carried out a study on migration and indigenous children in Latin America. The study focuses on indigenous child migratory flows from Bolivia to Argentina, from Ecuador to Colombia and from Guatemala to Mexico. It deals with three different situations that affect children: children that migrate alone (long- and short-term, even daily, migration); children that migrate with their families; and children remaining in the country of origin with other family members.

Climate change and the environment[3]

12. UNICEF is increasingly concerned about the impact of climate change on indigenous children. It is vital to address children in the context of the environment and climate, both in terms of the impact of the environment on indigenous children's survival, growth and development and in terms of the important roles indigenous children can play as agents for change. At the country level, UNICEF highlights the importance of child and youth participation in climate change, vulnerability assessments for children with respect to climate change, the incorporation of

[2] See E/2007/43, para. 113.

[3] See E/2008/43, para. 100.

environment and climate change into education curricula, the provision of safe water and sanitation to children, and the development of substantive disaster risk reduction policies and procedures to protect children from potential increases in natural disasters.

13. The work of UNICEF on climate change and the environment in Latin American countries has engaged indigenous children in global policy events, education and communication campaigns. In particular, the adolescent citizenship programme in Brazil empowers indigenous youth and women to participate in policy formulation in their territories, through which they promote environmental preservation and reforestation. In Paraguay, indigenous children and teachers participated in the development of the "Chaco Rapére" project, an educational tool endorsed by the Ministry of Education, which teaches children about risk prevention. Lastly, UNICEF supported the participation of indigenous children in policy, education and advocacy at the United Nations Climate Change Conferences in 2009, the fifteenth Conference of the Parties, and in 2010, the sixteenth Conference of the Parties.

B. Response to recommendations made during previous sessions of the Permanent Forum addressed to one or more agencies or to the United Nations system in general

Adolescent suicide[4]

14. The UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean is currently conducting a study on adolescent suicide, with case studies from Brazil, Colombia and Peru. While the study will be finalized in the first quarter of 2011, preliminary results show that the change of family patterns from extended to nuclear family, the loss of indigenous territories and discrimination have a major impact on the decision of adolescents to commit suicide. The study makes a series of policy recommendations which will be widely disseminated.

Incorporating a cultural perspective into health policies, programmes and reproductive health services[5]

15. An intervention developed by the UNICEF country office in Peru in 2002 demonstrated that intercultural approaches to obstetric care increased coverage of institutional obstetric services, reduced maternal and perinatal mortality and established a more sustainable relationship between the service provider and the user. A participatory study undertaken by that office in 2000 also showed that resistance to institutional birthing was mostly cultural in nature. Four strategies were instituted to overcome that barrier. They included maternity waiting houses to resolve the difficulty posed by geographic distance; family and community support to make maternity and the mother's condition a priority; comprehensive health insurance to cover the cost; and the cultural adaptation of maternity services to overcome the fear of cultural differences that prevents indigenous women from seeking maternal health care. Traditional practices were systematized on the basis of universal know-how and several research projects conducted at the local operational

[4] See E/2007/43, para. 65.

[5] See E/2006/43, para. 48.

level. Finally, UNICEF identified the health facilities where staff were most committed to the intervention and provided them with training. Universities that provide training for the health sector now have a more open approach to culturally sensitive health care. Overall, the experience transformed everyday service by promoting cultural changes in the approach to care and in its routine elements.

16. In Guatemala, where indigenous women, compared to non-indigenous women, have the highest maternal mortality rates, the Ministry of Health is implementing a strategy to reduce maternal deaths. The UNICEF country office in Guatemala, in cooperation with the UNICEF country office in Peru, has provided technical assistance through international experts. The most important area of work has been vertical childbirth assistance for indigenous women. The national authorities believe that this methodology can be adapted and adopted in the country.

17. In Bangladesh, an integrated package of maternal, neonatal and child survival interventions is being implemented by the Government and UNICEF in partnership with several non-governmental organizations. At the project's beginning, qualitative formative research was undertaken to explore, understand and assess local knowledge and maternal, child and neonatal care practices among the indigenous populations, which highlighted the need for localized methods for gaining understanding of community contexts. In response to research findings, special efforts are being made in indigenous areas to include traditional healers and birth attendants in communication activities. Additional support is provided by locally recruited and run community support groups, which work to increase local knowledge and acceptance of positive health behaviours and provide material and social assistance to vulnerable mothers and children. Innovative methods for skilled service delivery have also been designed for remote indigenous communities including mobile clinics operated by non-governmental organizations, satellite clinics and outreach services.

18. In the Congo, implementation of health-related activities has been undertaken in collaboration with the Association Espoir Renaît and the Catholic missionaries, who have been working with the Baka peoples for a long time. On the basis of that collaboration, a number of outputs were delivered, including the building of health posts in 10 villages; health campaigns for polio vaccination, yaws eradication and vitamin A distribution; installation of hand pumps; construction and rehabilitation of schools; and distribution of school kits and agricultural tools in selected villages. During its second phase (2005-2006), the project sought to promote participation and empowerment of the Baka peoples by establishing health, education and water committees in selected villages. In 2005, the preparatory schools established in the Sangha were recognized by the Ministry of Education, and the Sangha Department council committed to collaborate in training Baka teachers and community health workers. The project was partially extended to selected locations of the Likouala Department, and contacts were established with the programme for human development of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Additional funds were raised, and videos documenting the situation of the Baka peoples were produced to be used as advocacy tools.

19. Indigenous health workers and local leaders have a key role in early childhood care. The UNICEF approach to early childhood care in indigenous areas includes raising awareness of the importance of immunization and other measures to protect children from transmittable diseases. UNICEF recognizes that effective early

childhood development should address and, whenever appropriate, include indigenous practices for childcare, feeding, personal and environmental hygiene, newborn stimulation and preschool education. For example, in Colombia, through the partnership between the Ministry of National Education, the Colombian Institute of Family Well-being, the Guambía indigenous council, the University of Cauca and UNICEF, early childhood comprehensive care and assistance was provided for the Misak indigenous group. Early childhood development was incorporated as a formal programme of the council of Guambía, Cauca, within the framework of its community education project. Pedagogical material on child-rearing practices and play with an intercultural approach was systematized and structured. Several studies on child-rearing practices have been developed with UNICEF support in such countries as Chile, Nicaragua and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela with the participation of indigenous women.

Increased participation of indigenous peoples, including women, in programme design, implementation and monitoring[6]

20. The UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, jointly with other organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, has been promoting several indigenous leaders consultative groups for the United Nations at the country level. In 2003, the Regional Office established a consultative group on indigenous issues made up of selected indigenous leaders and intellectuals, with the aim of incorporating the indigenous point of view in UNICEF policy and strategy for Latin America. In 2009, as a result of strong advocacy by UNICEF at the level of the regional directors, that body was converted into a consultative group for all United Nations entities at the regional level.

21. Examples of UNICEF activities in the above-mentioned area include its support for the participation of indigenous leaders and adolescents in the design of general comment No. 11 (2009) on indigenous children and their rights under the Convention, drafted at the fiftieth session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean has promoted the participation of indigenous peoples in the development of laws in several countries, including Costa Rica, Honduras and Paraguay. It has also supported the participation of indigenous children in the debate on constitutional reform in Bolivia.

22. Support has also been provided to young indigenous women to participate in such key events as the eleventh session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Brasilia in 2010, and the Preparatory Meeting for the VI Meeting of Indigenous Women of America, held in Peru in 2010.

Intercultural bilingual education[7]

23. The major contribution by UNICEF to the rights of indigenous peoples has been in the area of education, with a special focus on bilingual education which dates back to the late 1970s, when it was developed in Latin America in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders, including national ministries of education, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

[6] See E/2009/43, para. 11.

[7] See E/2005/43 and Corr.2, para. 52.

(UNESCO), non-governmental organizations and indigenous peoples' organizations. During the 1990s, UNICEF contributed to the development of a new approach to bilingual education which included the incorporation of indigenous language and culture in primary school curricula, the training of indigenous teachers in managing both conventional and indigenous elements of the curricula, active pedagogy and child participation. Those practices triggered a shift from the concept of bilingual education to the concept of intercultural/bilingual education.

24. In Viet Nam, action research on mother tongue-based bilingual education is being carried out by the Ministry of Education and Training, in collaboration with the UNICEF country office, in three provinces with three respective ethnic minority languages with advanced practice in these areas. The action research programme is designed to develop an applicable and sustainable policy for bilingual education, with practical guidelines for successful implementation by the end of 2015.

25. In Malaysia, UNICEF works in partnership with the Ministry of Education to address disparities in education, particularly of vulnerable groups of children, including the Orang Asli. In 2010 UNICEF published *Koleksi Cerita Rakyat Masyarakat Orang Asli*, volumes 1 and 2, to support pupils and teachers in 94 Orang Asli schools throughout Peninsular Malaysia. UNICEF provided support materials, training and capacity-building to enhance teaching and learning strategies.

26. The UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean has supported the organization of regional congresses in bilingual intercultural education, which are held every two years, contributing in 2010 to the ninth Latin American Congress on Bilingual Intercultural Education, held in Guatemala. The congresses provide an excellent opportunity to share experiences in this area across the region.

27. In Argentina, UNICEF has been supporting intercultural bilingual education for indigenous children and adolescents in rural communities of five priority provinces, with the goal of improving access to basic education and graduation rates at the primary level. In partnership with the National Ministry of Education, the respective provincial ministries, non-governmental organizations and indigenous leaders, the conditions in 300 residential schools of the five provinces were analysed to improve their infrastructure and furnishings. Bilingual education materials were developed for primary schools and will be distributed in 1,500 intercultural bilingual schools. Among other things, publications on indigenous education were developed as a key advocacy tool, and support was provided to centres dedicated to the strengthening of indigenous children and women in three communities.

28. In Peru, UNICEF influenced new national actors on issues of intercultural bilingual education, prioritizing it in more than five regions and providing technical and financial support at the central and regional levels. In Paraguay UNICEF helped to reinforce the institutional and technical capacities of the Ministry of Education and Culture and non-governmental organizations to apply the law on indigenous education, as well as the capacity of non-governmental organizations to influence policy on education. The Ministry and indigenous organizations received technical assistance in linguistics, teacher training and organization, provided by indigenous professionals from Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador and Guatemala. At least 200 indigenous teachers from 20 indigenous communities have since begun training in strategic topics, and a manual on cultural research methods has been published, as have five studies on the science and culture of the indigenous peoples of Paraguay.

29. In Cambodia, UNICEF has been supporting the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport in carrying out a range of activities aimed at improving education for communities in remote areas of Cambodia bordering Viet Nam and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Some of the most recent achievements include the development and dissemination by the Ministry of guidelines on implementation of education for indigenous children in the highland provinces, which is the first formal document on bilingual education. In response to the lack of educational opportunities for children of remote indigenous communities, the Ministry, in collaboration with UNICEF and CARE, developed a participatory community school model of bilingual education which targets indigenous children. The programme is based on community participation, with communities establishing their own school boards on the basis of traditional decision-making processes. The boards are actively involved in developing books and educational materials, managing the schools and selecting community members to be trained as teachers. By November 2010, the programme had been implemented in eight districts distributed throughout three provinces, covering 20 community schools and seven state schools. As a result, 1,232 children (including 541 girls) from rural indigenous communities attended school.

30. The UNICEF country office in the Congo supports schools applying the "observer, réfléchir, agir" or "observe, think, act" (ORA) method, a bilingual and intercultural education method based on an active pedagogy. The schools provide a two-year programme in the local indigenous language, as well as French classes. Teachers are indigenous persons, school hours are adapted to the local life habits of the indigenous peoples and schools are located within reach of indigenous communities. The introduction of the ORA method has shown that a preparatory bilingual education cycle can help indigenous children in acquiring basic skills. After the preparatory school they enter the official primary school, and drop-out rates are low.

Data collection and disaggregation[8]

31. Significant efforts have been made in past years to improve the availability of disaggregated data on indigenous children and adolescents in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

32. UNICEF has been in partnership with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in an effort to introduce suitable questions into the new censuses to acquire more information on the situation of indigenous peoples in the countries of the region, which will have their next round of censuses from 2010 to 2017. In addition, a socio-linguistic atlas of the indigenous peoples in Latin America with information by country and geo-cultural areas has been developed on the basis of national censuses. The publication includes a DVD with disaggregated data from the official census of each country (for example, the proportion of indigenous population per country; the distribution by rural/urban, sex and age; and so on), maps and relevant information concerning legislation on education for indigenous peoples. With data collected from the implementation of specific censuses and household surveys, a complete indigenous atlas has been developed in Paraguay, supported by UNICEF and other organizations. Costa Rica is supporting the

[8] See E/2003/43, para. 5 (b).

gathering of disaggregated data to facilitate analysis of the situation of the most vulnerable and excluded groups and promoting public policies and programmes aimed at reducing existing gaps and inequalities.

33. Nevertheless, obstacles remain, since there are countries that still do not have disaggregated data, or in some cases the ethnic variable is incipient. The questions included in censuses and household surveys vary by country. Thus, a comparative approach is not viable (for example, Mexico and Peru use linguistic categories while Ecuador uses self-identification).

Birth registration[9]

34. The UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean encouraged the active participation of many indigenous leaders from 12 Latin American and Caribbean countries in the regional conference on birth registration organized by UNICEF, the Organization of American States and Plan International in August 2007 in Asuncion. The event was an important opportunity to make civil registries aware of the obstacles affecting indigenous children and adolescents in this matter. It was also a key occasion to empower indigenous representatives by providing them with information on the importance of birth registration. The final documents encompassed most of the recommendations made by indigenous leaders, and the meeting motivated the countries from the region to commit to reaching universal birth registration. A follow-up meeting will take place in 2011.

35. UNICEF has also developed a study with Plan International on good practices and lessons learned on birth registration of indigenous peoples in four countries in Latin America: Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Panama.

Violence against indigenous women and children[10]

36. In Mexico, UNICEF contributed to the design of a joint programme funded by the United Nations Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women, competing against more than 1,000 other projects from around the world. UNICEF joined ECLAC, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, several federal bodies and civil society organizations in starting up a three-year joint United Nations programme on building and evaluating an integral model to prevent gender violence among indigenous populations in Mexico, with an intercultural perspective. The contribution of UNICEF includes piloting protocols to respond to gender violence against children and adolescents in indigenous communities in Oaxaca and Chiapas states.

37. The UNICEF country office in Brazil has contributed to establishing local child protection systems to respond to domestic violence, sexual abuse and exploitation of children and adolescents. Specific attention has been given to how to adapt child protection procedures to take into account indigenous forms of organization and culture in Santa Cruz de Cabralia, as part of efforts to improve child protection in the Porto Seguro region of Bahia.

38. In Bolivia, UNICEF has focused its cooperation programme on the most severe social and cultural inequalities through the promotion of human rights-based

[9] See E/2007/43, para. 66.

[10] See E/2006/43, para. 47.

public policies. The programme supported initiatives to ensure that indigenous groups have access to quality bilingual intercultural education and to health services, particularly among the Guarani people. Water and sanitation policies were fostered in the most excluded rural communities, most of which are in the eastern part of the country. UNICEF made efforts to develop social protection systems for those children forced to work in the most adverse and dangerous conditions in the sugarcane and chestnut harvests. UNICEF also advocated for support for people migrating to Argentina, Brazil and Chile as well as for indigenous women receiving low salaries. UNICEF identified the need to emphasize incorporation of the cultural vision of indigenous groups in public policies and the placement of children at the cultural centre of Bolivian society, including eradicating violence against children and promoting a culture of peace.

39. In the Central African Republic, UNICEF supports indigenous children affected by HIV/AIDS. In 2009, the UNICEF country office in the Central African Republic provided direct support to community-based interventions that aim to improve the protection, care and access of orphans and other vulnerable children to basic services. Community-based child protection committees were established, with the mandate to oversee the situation of vulnerable children and monitor violations of their rights.

C. Response to recommendations made during the ninth session of the Permanent Forum addressed to one or more agencies or to the United Nations system in general

Restoration of cultural heritage[11]

40. UNICEF has been supporting the recuperation of languages such as the language of the Añu people in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which has been identified as an endangered language, mainly through education programmes.

41. In Guatemala, with UNICEF support, the Ministry of Education trained groups of oral bilingual teachers for a third consecutive year in the use of K'iché and Q'anjob'al language reading and writing. The teachers prepared support materials which covered the oral traditions of their culture, the Mayan's use of technology and the Mayan calendar.

D. Addressing issues of special interest to the Permanent Forum

Promotion of sustainable forest exploitation to protect indigenous peoples dependent on forest resources

42. In the Central African Republic, UNICEF is supporting participatory community development with a mixed public and private project designed to work on forest management in the Central African Republic (PARPAF). The main focus of the project is giving communities a voice in their own development, including the promotion of sustainable forest exploitation to protect indigenous peoples dependent on forest resources who are marginalized and economically and socially vulnerable. The programme area includes 19 villages with exclusively or predominantly Aka

[11] See E/2010/43, para. 24.

and Mbororo people. Activities conducted with the Aka and Mbororo have included the following: (a) community mobilization sessions on their current situation vis-à-vis access to basic health services, discrimination issues, culturally sensitive health issues, and language/cultural and geographical barriers to service provision; (b) community mobilization and participatory sessions on local development priorities for Aka and Mbororo; (c) training and community mobilization sessions on renewable energies, climate change, deforestation and sustainable forestry exploitation; and (d) mediation between the Aka and Mbororo people and the private companies, taking into account the people's rights and the companies' deforestation priorities. The Aka and Mbororo have participated in all stages of the development and validation of the production of local development plans that have been finalized by the different districts, which implies that in the short- and mid-term plans for community development, specific priorities have been identified and promoted by the Aka and Mbororo. Included with those priorities is the beginning of a broader social transformation process that will include justice and land ownership, as well as an adaptation of social services.

Indigenous children with disabilities

43. UNICEF is mindful of the interaction of indigenous status with disability, and plans to increase its efforts to promote and protect the rights of indigenous children with disabilities.

44. In Mexico, there is a programme for children with disabilities in rural and indigenous communities, who face the possibility of multiple forms of discrimination and poor access to services, integration and participation in the community.

45. The pilot project carried out by UNICEF addressed, among other things, issues of school inclusion and community attitudes, to ensure an inclusive approach to children with disabilities at the state and municipal levels. Multidisciplinary teams made up of a doctor, a physical or occupational therapist, an education specialist and two community promoters were deployed in the community and financed by the state agency for family development (DIF). The community promoters were men and women recognized in the local community, with a command of local indigenous languages. They formed important links within the community to mobilize resources for and redress stigma against children with disabilities. The approach addressed equity issues in several dimensions, given that children with disabilities, living in rural communities and of indigenous origin, are doubly or triply excluded from services and community life.

46. By contrast to other community-based rehabilitation programmes, UNICEF negotiated the participation of government staff and resources from the outset of the pilot, increasing the chances of its adoption and scaling-up as a public policy in the state of Oaxaca. An external evaluation demonstrates that the approach can be replicated widely within Oaxaca, at the national level, as well as in other countries.

Child participation

47. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children's participation is an important element of the work of UNICEF to promote and protect the rights of indigenous children. Since it encourages indigenous children to become

active citizens and gives visibility to their cause, participation in decision-making is an empowering practice and an essential expression of their rights.

48. UNICEF supported the participation of a 15-year-old Brazilian advocate to attend the ninth session of the Permanent Forum, providing an opportunity for this young advocate to raise the profile of indigenous children and youth by making a statement in plenary about the situation of his community and the right to participation of indigenous children and adolescents. UNICEF is also taking steps to increase its efforts at the country level in this regard. For example, in Brazil, UNICEF is implementing a project on the protection of children and adolescents in the indigenous Pataxó de Coroa Vermelha village and with four other developments in the Pataxó surrounding communities in the state of Bahia. One objective of the project is to develop the capacities of adolescents for self-protection against risks and violence, especially sexual abuse and exploitation.

49. The UNICEF country office in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is also developing a programme to reinforce knowledge on human rights with the direct participation of the national network of indigenous adolescents and young people through workshops, interchanges and production of materials. In India, UNICEF, in partnership with LEPRA Health in Action, is implementing the Link Worker Scheme to generate awareness and foster behavioural changes among the general community by sharing accurate knowledge and information on HIV/AIDS in a tribal-dominated district. Accelerating this HIV/AIDS awareness programme through the involvement of young people has been highly successful.

Dissemination of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

50. The UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean has supported the translation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into 15 indigenous languages; child-friendly translated versions in Ecuador and Costa Rica (to be used as a basis for versions in other countries); and a publication with the International Labour Organization (ILO) (with the Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries). The translations were being coordinated with Fondo Indígena (Indigenous Fund).

51. Empowerment of indigenous peoples has also been key. Efforts in this area include inter-agency work on the dissemination of the Declaration. Workshops were held in Peru for South America in 2008, and in 2009, in Nicaragua for Central America and Mexico, and Trinidad and Tobago for the Caribbean. Indigenous organizations, Governments and the offices of ombudspersons were invited to participate.

Respect for the principle of free, prior and informed consent

52. While the free, prior and informed consent approach is considered by UNICEF to be inherent in its human rights-based approach to programming, it is also used as a specific methodology to conduct projects and studies. The participation of indigenous adolescents is a key component of UNICEF programming and is critical for ensuring free prior informed consent as stated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Capacity-building programmes on indigenous peoples' issues for staff, or a plan for capacity-building activities in this area

53. The Consultation on Indigenous Peoples' and Minorities' Issues which UNICEF held in April 2009 led to the formulation of a road map and action proposals in the development of the following: (a) a strategic framework/guidance note; (b) programme guidance; (c) knowledge management; and (d) involvement with international mechanisms on indigenous peoples' and minorities' issues. The implementation of the road map and action proposals will lead to an enhanced awareness of indigenous peoples' issues among UNICEF staff. UNICEF also participated in a train-the-trainers workshop on indigenous peoples' issues, which took place in Turin, Italy, from 8 to 11 June 2009. The training aimed to strengthen the capacity of United Nations staff to provide training in ways to engage indigenous peoples effectively and bring indigenous peoples' rights and issues into the mainstream of development-related United Nations work at the country level.

54. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF staff members, including representatives and deputy representatives, are regularly updated on relevant issues regarding the Permanent Forum.

Partnerships for indigenous children's rights

55. In Brazil, UNICEF is giving high visibility to racial disparities and the participation of adolescents, recognizing that knowledge is needed to support the formulation of public policies that promote gender and racial equality. UNICEF is working at different levels with local, state and federal governments to implement public policies to reduce racial, ethnic and gender disparities.

56. In collaboration with eight other entities (ILO, the Secretariat of Central American Social Integration, the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture, Fondo Indígena, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, the Andean Community, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples), UNICEF has been working to address child labour among indigenous peoples. An event was held in Colombia in 2010 with the participation of Governments, indigenous organizations, unions and employers' organizations. The UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean has reinforced its internal network of focal points on indigenous issues. In each country office, there is one focal point in charge of indigenous issues (in some country offices there is more than one, depending on their areas of expertise), and training on intercultural approaches to programming has been ongoing.

57. To support the realization of the rights of indigenous children and women, UNICEF builds and maintains synergies with other United Nations organizations and agencies, as well as Governments and donors. Advocacy has been an important strategy aimed at advancing the rights of indigenous peoples. In Cameroon, it has been undertaken through personal advocacy and representational activities by the head of office and other senior staff and through mass media campaigns. Advocacy for the rights of indigenous children has also been conducted through the organization of the first celebration by Cameroon of the International Day of Indigenous Peoples, in collaboration with ILO and the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa. A joint assessment was conducted with the Government to assess the needs and rights of indigenous children.

58. In 2009, the UNICEF country office in the Central African Republic undertook advocacy with 96 representatives of ministries and 62 members of the National Assembly for the ratification of the Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries. That effort contributed to the country's ratification of the Convention in 2010. In 2009, UNICEF provided training and/or sensitization activities on human rights to 12,392 people, including 7,900 Aka/B'Aka (1,316 children and 3,457 women) in 160 villages, 285 Aka leaders and seven female Aka/B'Aka teachers, among others. Training in children's and minority rights was held in 2009 at 130 Aka/B'Aka forest camp sites and in 100 Bantu ethnic villages in Lobaye and Sangha Mbaere prefectures, and 1,000 Aka/B'Aka children had access to education facilities, including ethno-education in three schools rehabilitated under this programme.

59. Although gradual, partnerships on indigenous peoples' issues are evolving at the United Nations inter-agency level, particularly in Latin America. In collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNICEF Congo for example, supported the review by the Parliament of a law (now promulgated) for the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous populations.

Human resources

60. The Gender, Rights and Civic Engagement Section within the Division of Policy and Practice at UNICEF headquarters acts as the focal point for indigenous issues on the global level.[12] At the regional level, the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean is the only UNICEF regional office that has a section for indigenous and afrodescendant children's rights, which is comprised of one senior and two other posts. The regional office has reinforced its internal network of focal points on indigenous issues, with each country office having one or more focal points on indigenous issues.

61. As part of the aforementioned stocktaking exercise, a survey of 24 country offices was conducted to determine their approach to working with indigenous children and women. Concerning human resources, 20 out of the 24 respondent country offices indicated that they had recruited a long-term consultant or, in a few cases, an officer as a focal point for indigenous issues. When needed, specialists in intercultural/bilingual education, intercultural health, intercultural communication for child protection and other subjects were hired in the framework of major donor-assisted programmes and projects.

E. Budgetary allocations

62. As part of the stocktaking exercise on the Fund's work on indigenous issues, an e-mail survey of UNICEF country offices was launched, which included questions on budget allocations to support initiatives addressing indigenous peoples. Of the 24 country offices which completed the survey, 6 indicated that they relied on annual budgets of more than half a million dollars. The budgets of an additional 8 country offices ranged from $100,000 to $500,000; 10 offices spent less than $100,000 per year. Those figures indicate that the budget available for indigenous

[12] The section has one P-3, one P-4 and one P-5 managing the portfolio.

issues is less than $500,000 for three quarters of the surveyed country offices, a sum allowing for some demonstrative projects and self-contained advocacy activities.

F. Obstacles encountered in implementing the recommendations of the Permanent Forum

63. The stocktaking exercise of the Fund's work on indigenous issues revealed, among other things, that processes, methods and tools for managing programmes and projects with indigenous peoples should be fine-tuned, and that staff should be trained in their adaptation and application to particular field settings. UNICEF intends to address the issues identified by the study through the road map and action proposals it developed during the Consultation on Indigenous Peoples' and Minorities' Issues. Also needed is disaggregated data at the national and subnational levels in order to improve the planning process. As mentioned, in Latin America, UNICEF, along with other United Nations organizations and agencies, is actively promoting the inclusion of this kind of information in the next round of national census.

64. In spite of its widespread efforts in favour of indigenous children, action by UNICEF is not currently supported by a clear organizational policy that defines its position with respect to indigenous issues, the nature of its commitment and the specific processes that guide its work.

Proposed solutions

65. In response to the need for a specific organizational policy, the task of UNICEF will be to develop a strategic framework on indigenous children to help to convey the commitment of UNICEF to working with indigenous peoples, give visibility to its activities and provide a framework for stronger support.

66. At the global level, UNICEF must also strengthen its capacities to adequately fulfil its leadership role, and generate, document and disseminate knowledge. To enable the development and sharing of experience and knowledge on indigenous issues in all regions, existing experiences need to be systematized. There is the need to build on the expertise of UNICEF regional and country offices in Latin America, as well as their strategic partnerships with community and civil society organizations to stimulate interventions and policies in other regions of the world, including the Caribbean.

1. Strategic framework

67. As recommended by the Permanent Forum, UNICEF acknowledges the need for the preparation of a strategic framework, which should be accompanied by guidelines for implementation. The strategic framework would be able to provide concrete operational indications about the conditions to be met for successful implementation.

2. Adapting the UNICEF approach to different regional and subregional contexts

68. As outlined above, the UNICEF approach towards indigenous issues has been heavily influenced by experience from Latin America. UNICEF will need to make an effort to share experiences more effectively between different regions.

3. Refining the understanding of local cultures and societies

69. Understanding indigenous cultures and societies is a prerequisite for working with indigenous peoples. In the immediate future UNICEF plans to conduct a study on sociocultural, spiritual and legal norms and institutions underpinning women's and children's rights within two selected indigenous communities. The study will form the first in a series of studies aimed at a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, spiritual and legal settings and contexts of indigenous peoples and their implications for programming.

4. Institutional collaboration and partnerships

70. The work of UNICEF is part of the commitment by the programmes, funds and agencies of the United Nations system to put into effect the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Inter-agency collaborative linkages will therefore be pursued in the implementation of the Declaration, particularly at the country level. At the country level, in particular, partnerships will be established with other agencies, especially when UNICEF programmes and projects are called upon to address issues for which the Fund has limited expertise. Conversely, UNICEF will bring its special expertise on indigenous children's and women's rights to United Nations programmes assisting indigenous peoples in other areas. The establishment of working groups on indigenous issues, within the United Nations country team, as recommended by the United Nations Development Group Guidelines, will contribute significantly to strengthening such inter-agency linkages.

5. Next steps

71. A priority for UNICEF in 2011 will be the development of a programme strategy on indigenous and minority issues to guide country offices in programming in the area. Other initiatives to be implemented in the short term include establishing a community of practice on indigenous peoples' and minorities' issues in collaboration with UNDP and UNFPA, the objectives of which are internal capacity development among United Nations practitioners, operational coordination and collaboration, knowledge management and the strengthening of partnerships with indigenous peoples and organizations. Furthermore, UNICEF will finalize and disseminate child- and adolescent-friendly versions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as produce a working paper on the right to participation of indigenous children.

72. The organization looks forward to working with the Permanent Forum in improving its performance in supporting the rights of indigenous communities and their children.